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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/SE - NETOS

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TAGS: [CY](#) [PREL](#) [TU](#) [US](#)
SUBJECT: TURKEY: CYPRUS WATCHERS DOWNBEAT ON TALKS

REF: A. NICOSIA 836
[1](#)B. ANKARA 1598
[1](#)C. NICOSIA 703

Classified By: DCM Doug Silliman, for reasons 1.4 (b,d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY. Skepticism about the chances for a Cyprus settlement continues across a range of Turkish academics and opinion leaders who track the issue, a small group of whom the DCM hosted October 31 for a free-ranging discussion. The prevailing sentiments include:
-- G/C voters turned to Christofias primarily because they saw themselves "losing ground" in their international image under Papadopoulos, not because they had become pro-settlement;
-- Christofias and the G/C side lack motivation to negotiate because they have nothing to lose should the talks fail;
-- a two-state solution is the best starting point and offers the most promising chance for a lasting solution, even if those two states later agree to unify. Our one Turkish Cypriot participant disagreed with this point;
-- Greek nationalism and the desire to control the entire island is a significant obstacle to G/C compromise; and
-- Kosovo offers a glaring comparison for the lack of recognition for the "TRNC." END SUMMARY

Widespread Views: Greek Cypriots want the Whole Island

[1](#)2. (C) Doubts on Greek Cypriot motives unfolded as follows: The initial optimism about GOC President Christofias had been misplaced. AKEL has always been "opportunistic," in the past even lining up with EOKA and favoring Enosis. In the Greek Cypriot elections which brought Christofias to power, the main issue had not been achieving a settlement but the G/C public concern that they were "losing ground" in their international image because of former GOC President Papadopoulos's hardline posture. The most important element to be taken into account is Greek Cypriot nationalism which insists that the island is Greek and should remain Greek.

Turkish Cypriots are Risking More

[1](#)3. (C) According to these Cyprus watchers, the risks of failure in the talks are greater for Turkish Cypriots. This fact forces them to be more conciliatory. Isolation is a "secondary concern" for the Greek Cypriots because they already are EU members. Europe -- which caused T/C isolation -- has to "pay the price" for bringing the Greek Cypriots into the EU by supporting Turkish Cypriot independence. The "essence" of the problem of reunification is whether Greek Cypriots are prepared to share the island. Greek Cypriots, the Turks argued, are prepared to take back Turkish Cypriots

only if they come as their "subjects," albeit with "privileged rights." The Greek Cypriots must be convinced that they will lose the northern part of the island should the talks fail. "Threatened recognition" may be the only viable leverage that will influence Greek Cypriots. Many Turks see compelling similarities between Cyprus and Kosovo, and believe it is fundamentally unfair that Europe and the U.S. have recognized Kosovo but not the "TRNC."

Two States Must Come Before One

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¶4. (C) When asked what Turkish Cypriots want to get out of a settlement, nearly all participants (unhelpfully) argued that T/C views were not important: the big international players must ensure the historical wrong of Turkish Cypriot isolation is corrected. Several argued that the only workable solution in the long run is recognition of two independent States, one Greek and one Turkish. Those two states could then sign various bilateral agreements, such as a non-aggression pact, and eventually even agree to some form of union. While not the position of the current Turkish Government, they argued that this is the personal opinion of most Turks and of many in the bureaucracy and MFA. Ideally, an overall package that offers Turkey and an independent northern Cyprus entry into the EU in return for a settlement could work.

¶5. (C) One minority voice -- a Turkish Cypriot journalist -- disagreed with his Turkish colleagues that international recognition of a separate T/C state is a prerequisite for a lasting solution. While pessimistic, he argued that the current UN talks might be able to bridge the gaps between the two communities enough to find a workable compromise.

Cyprus According to Soysal

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¶6. (C) In a separate conversation earlier in October with Emboffs, former FM Mumtaz Soysal disputed allegations that the TGS is calling the shots on Cyprus issues. Soysal said that TGS has redlines: it would never agree to a complete withdrawal of all Turkish forces from the island. The Turkish security guarantee is critical. Beyond that, however, TGS takes little interest in the negotiations.

¶7. (C) Soysal said a settlement will prove elusive because T/C support for the Annan Plan has waned and the vast majority of residents in the north will want to retain their own "state." Turkey really wants to see two founding states of this new confederation as a final outcome of negotiations. Turkish Cypriots need to have the legal ability to declare independence if "things don't go well at some point in the future."

¶8. (C) Soysal stated that there is a high level of bitterness among the Turkish public toward Turkish Cypriots, who saw their strong support for the Annan Plan in 2004 as a "sell-out" and a repudiation of the decades of strong support provided by Turkey to northern Cyprus. Soysal argued that most Turks also saw the vote on Annan as a betrayal of Rauf Denktash, who remains a revered personality throughout Anatolia. Turks also view as unfair that the Greek Cypriots' rejected Annan yet were "rewarded" with EU membership.

Comment

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¶9. (C) Cutting through the gloomy predictions, it is notable that even these skeptics acknowledge that the Turkish Government has given its support to Turkish Cypriot leader Talat, and that the Annan Plan remains the basic outline of what Ankara can accept in a settlement. On the down side, there was also a strong belief that Greek Cypriots have far less to gain in a settlement than Turkish Cypriots, and are therefore not engaging seriously. The strong emotional tinge to the conversations indicates that Cyprus still touches a raw nerve with Turkish public opinion.

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